the very same protection and safeguard in the matter of removability of Election Commissioners from office as is available to the Chief Election Commissioner. The said proposal along with the other proposals on electoral reforms are presently under consideration of Department Related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice.

Vacant posts in High Courts

992. SHRI PRAVEEN RASHTRAPAL: Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state:

(a) the reasons for 26 per cent vacant posts in High Courts as stated by Hon'ble Chief Justice of India on 29th November, 2007;

(b) the actions proposed by Government subsequent to the above statement;

(c) the sanctioned strength and working strength of judges of High Courts as on 31 st December, 2007; and

"(d) whether it is a fact that delay in deciding cases would help the accused on bail?

THE MINISTER OF LAW AND JUSTICE (SHRI H.R. BHARDWAJ): (a) and (b) Pursuant to the Supreme Court Judgement of October 6, 1993 read with their Advisory Opinion of October 28,1998, the process of initiation of proposal for appointment of Judges of a High Court lies with the Chief Justice of the High Court. The Government has been requesting the Chief Justices of the High Courts, from time to time, to initiate proposals for filling up of the present and vacancies anticipated during the next six months.

(c) As on 31 st December, 2007, against the sanctioned strength of 690 Judges, 595 Judges were in position leaving 95 vacancies to be filled up.

(d) With a view to expedite disposal of the cases, Government has taken a number of measures such as establishment of Fast Track Courts, Family Courts and are providing funds to the State Governments for strengthening the judicial infrastructure and computerisation of the Courts.

Retirement age of judges

993. DR. ABHISHEK MANU SINGHVI: Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is considering a proposal to extend the age of retirement for all judges in the country to 65 years; and

(b) if not, the reasons why this is not being considered?

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THE MINISTER OF LAW AND JUSTICE (SHRI H.R. BHARDWAJ): (a) and (b) A proposal to increase the retirement age of the Judges of the Supreme Court and the High Courts by three years is under examination of the Government. As regards increase in the retirement age of District/Subordinate Court judges, it is the concern of the respective State Governments.

Filling up vacancies of judges

t994. SHRI AJAY MAROO: Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn towards the report of the Chief Justice of India, according to which 26 per cent seats in the High Courts are lying vacant;

(b) what are the reasons for these seats lying vacant for a long time; and

(c) the steps being taken by Government to fill up these vacancies?

.THE MINISTER OF LAW AND JUSTICE (SHRI H.R. BHARDWAJ): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) Pursuant to the Supreme Court Judgement of October 6, 1993 read with their Advisory Opinion of October 28, 1998. the process of initiation of proposal for appointment of Judges of a High Court lies with the Chief Justice of that High Court. The Government has been requesting the Chief Justices of the High Courts, from time to time, to initiate proposals for filling up of the present and vacancies anticipated during the next six months.

Status of Gram Nyayalayas **Bill, 2007**

995. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL: SHRI DARA SINGH:

Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Department related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Personnel, Public
Grievances, Law and Justice has submitted its report on Gram Nyayalayas Bill, 2007;

(b) if so, whether common man would receive fair treatment and legal aid from unencumbered corruption;

(c) whether Government proposes to fix any definite time-limit for enforcement of above mentioned Act; and

(d) if so, what would be the ratio of expenditure between the Centre and State, since the Gujarat Government has reportedly expressed inability to meet the estimated expenditure of Rs. 39 crore per annum in this regard and if so, the details in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF LAW AND JUSTICE (SHRI H.R. BHARDWAJ): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Setting up of Gram Nyayalaya would bring to the people of rural areas speedy, affordable and substantial justice.

(c) The State Governments will be consulted before bringing into force the provisions of this enactment.

(d) The Central Government will meet the entire non-recurring expenditure and the recurring expenditure for first three years will be shared between the Central and State Governments following which, it will be met by the concerned State Governments.

tOriginal notice of the question was received in Hindi.